

Brussels, 20 November 2008

Now Online: "Europeana", Europe's Digital Library

Europeana, Europe's multimedia online library opens to the public today. At www.europeana.eu, Internet users around the world can now access more than two million books, maps, recordings, photographs, archival documents, paintings and films from national libraries and cultural institutions of the EU's 27 Member States. Europeana opens up new ways of exploring Europe's heritage: anyone interested in literature, art, science, politics, history, architecture, music or cinema will have free and fast access to Europe's greatest collections and masterpieces in a single virtual library through a web portal available in all EU languages. But this is just the beginning. In 2010, Europeana will give access to millions of items representing Europe's rich cultural diversity and will have interactive zones such as communities for special interests. Between 2009 and 2011, some €2 million per year of EU funding will be dedicated to this. The Commission also plans to involve the private sector in the further expansion of Europe's digital library. In September 2007, the European Parliament supported, in a resolution voted by an overwhelming majority, the creation of a European digital library.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission; said: *"With Europeana, we combine Europe's competitive advantage in communication and networking technologies with our rich cultural heritage. Europeans will now be able to access the incredible resources of our great collections quickly and easily in a single space. Europeana is much more than a library, it is a veritable dynamo to inspire 21st century Europeans to emulate the creativity of innovative forbears like the drivers of the Renaissance. Just imagine the possibilities it offers students, art-lovers or scholars to access, combine and search the cultural treasures of all Member States online. This is a strong demonstration of the fact that culture is at the heart of European integration."*

"Europeana offers a journey through time, across borders, and into new ideas of what our culture is. More than that, it will connect people to their history and, through interactive pages and tools, to each other," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. *"I now call on Europe's cultural institutions, publishing houses and technology companies to fill Europeana with further content in digital form. We should make Europeana a home for interactive creative participation at the fingertips of people who want to mould their own piece of European culture and share it with others. My objective is that in 2010, Europeana will include at least 10 million objects."*

Elisabeth Niggemann, Director-General of the German National Library and chair of the European Digital Library Foundation – the organisation behind Europeana –, added: *"Europeana makes cultural bodies more relevant to the Web 2.0 generation – a generation that expects to be able to read text, see video, hear sounds and view images all in the same space and time. By offering young people a complete multimedia experience it will connect them to Europe's culture, past and present."*

Europeana makes it possible to search and browse the digitised collections of Europe's libraries, archives and museums all at once. This means users can explore themes without searching for and visiting multiple sites and resources.

Europeana was initiated by the Commission in 2005 and brought to fruition in close cooperation with national libraries and other cultural bodies of the Member States as well as with the strong support of the European Parliament. Europeana is run by the European Digital Library Foundation, which brings together Europe's major associations of libraries, archives, museums, audiovisual archives and cultural institutions. Europeana is hosted by the Dutch national library, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek

Over 1,000 cultural organisations from across Europe have provided material for Europeana. Europe's museums, including the Louvre in Paris and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, have supplied digitised paintings and objects from their collections. State archives have made important national documents available, and France's Institut National de l'Audiovisuel supplied 80,000 broadcasts recording the 20th century, right back to early footage shot on the battlefields of France in 1914. National libraries all over Europe have contributed printed and manuscript material, including digitised copies of the great books that brought new ideas into the world.

In 2009-2010 around € 69 million will be available for research on digital libraries through the [EU's research programme](#). In the same period the [information society part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme](#) will allocate around € 50 million to improve access to Europe's cultural and scientific heritage.

Background:

The European Commission started to work on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material as early as 2000. Between 2000 and 2005 it co-funded research projects and stimulated a better collaboration between Member States that wanted to bring their cultural heritage online.

In June 2005, Commissioner Reding made the European digital library a flagship project of the EU's i2010 strategy for a European Information Society for growth and jobs ([IP/05/643](#)). In September 2005, the Commission outlined the measures needed to make Europe's cultural and scientific heritage accessible to all ([IP/05/1202](#)). This August, the Commission asked Member States to step up their efforts to contribute to Europeana, especially by providing more funding to digitisation and put clearer figures on how much material they would digitise. ([IP/08/1255](#), [MEMO/08/546](#)).

The Commission's work on the European Digital Library was accompanied by a High-Level Group of experts from the public and the private sector: from cultural institutions, the ICT industry and from right holders.

For more information:

<http://www.europeana.eu/>

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/index_en.htm/

A press pack on Europeana, including a MEMO and fact sheet is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=4505

The European Parliament resolution of 27 September 2008, "Towards a European digital library" (rapporteur: *Marie-Hélène Descamps*) can be found at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P6-TA-2007-0416>

Martin SELMAYR: 02.298.12.30

Mina Andreeva: 02.299.13.82

Important Notice:

The official inauguration of Europeana takes place today, **Thursday, 20 November, in the 'Palais de Charles de Lorraine' in The National Royal Library of Brussels**, in the presence of Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Commissioner Viviane Reding (Information Society and Media), Christine Albanel, France's Minister of Culture and currently President of the EU Council of Culture Ministers, the EU's Ministers responsible for culture and audiovisual affairs as well as representatives of Europe's cultural bodies.

The official launch of Europeana will follow a meeting of the Council of Culture Ministers today in Brussels. At this Council meeting, Culture Ministers are expected to adopt conclusions expressing strong political support to the European Commission's Europeana project.